

# The allegorical artist and the crises of history: Benjamin, Grandville, Baudelaire

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The enthronement of the commodity and the glitter of the distractions which surround it, this is the secret subject of Grandville's art. To this corresponds the schism between its utopian and its cynical element. . . . Under Grandville's pencil the whole of Nature is transformed into specialty items. He presents them in the same spirit in which advertisements – this word also arises at that time – begin to present their articles. He ends in madness.

Thus wrote Walter Benjamin of the caricaturist and illustrator Grandville in the section devoted to him of the 1935 essay, 'Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century'.<sup>1</sup> In the larger work on the nineteenth-century Parisian arcades, of which the essay was an exposé, Grandville was meant to figure prominently as an artist of the kind of Baudelairean modernity that Benjamin discerned in the commodity culture of Second Empire Paris, in which specialty items and *nouveautés* are raised to the level of poetic objects.

Indeed the figure of Grandville haunts the unfinished *Passagen-Werk* from its first stage in the late 1920s to the last, revised version of 1939, with an almost uncanny persistence. He appears in the earliest notes for the project, and the 1928 'Ring of Saturn' piece on the fantastic possibilities of iron construction is based on an image from his work, *Un Autre Monde*, of 1844 (figure 1).<sup>2</sup> In the 1939 exposé, despite the differences between it and the earlier version, Grandville retains his place as an emblematic figure of modernity allied to an equally emblematic cultural space (the universal exhibitions),<sup>3</sup> reflecting the phantasmagoria which defines the modern world.<sup>4</sup> When, in 1938, Benjamin recycled large portions of his *Passagen-Werk* documentation, from nearly every category, into his book on Baudelaire, he used a comparatively small portion of the material from dossier G, 'Exhibition Matters, Advertising, Grandville', and only two notes concerning Grandville in particular – as though he represented something substantively different, a distinct aspect of modern history.<sup>5</sup> Indeed in a letter to Horkheimer in September 1938 Benjamin indicates that he would later like to develop further the Grandville and Haussmann sections as he was then expanding the Baudelaire one.<sup>6</sup> The importance of Grandville for the origins of mod-

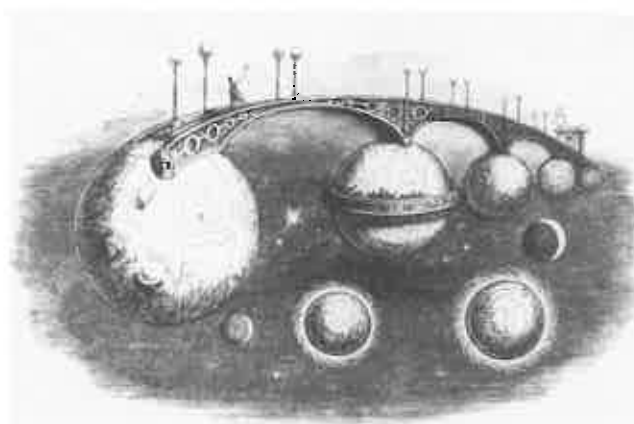


Figure 1. Le pont des planètes: this and all other illustrations are from Grandville, *Un Autre Monde* (1844).

ernity thus remained undiminished, despite the evolution of Benjamin's ideas. Yet the reasons for this importance have never been determined, nor his status in Benjamin's work overall fully explained.<sup>7</sup>

As the mention of the 'schism' between the utopian and the cynical in the above quotation suggests, Grandville embodies one of Benjamin's most important critical concepts, allegory. Transforming nature into the newest luxury goods or, conversely transfiguring merchandise into forms of the natural or cosmological, follows the allegorical principle first set out in Benjamin's 1926 book on the baroque, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, and developed further in his work on Baudelaire.<sup>8</sup> But if, as others have (rightly) argued, Baudelairean allegory ends in an impasse, the melancholy of the mortal heart which cannot keep pace, *hélas*, with the fleeting experience of modern life, Benjamin's study of Grandville pushes the notion of allegory to its furthest limits. In its Grandvillean form, allegory touches on some of Benjamin's most radical concepts – the destructive character, the dialectical image and historical materialism – at the frontier of revolutionary action, preserving within a single image both the means of liberation and the lurking danger of defeat, the proof of awakening and the menacing presence of myth.

The dualism in which Benjamin locates the peculiar modernity of Grandville's art came, ironically, from Baudelaire, who discusses him at length in his 1857 essay, *Quelques caricaturistes français*.<sup>9</sup> But Baudelaire criticizes Grandville's analogical and allegorical method as a failure of expression, an inability to make art and idea coincide, to make his art express his idea, or his idea spring from his art: 'Grandville a roulé pendant une grande partie de son existence sur l'idée générale de l'Analogie. . . . Mais il ne savait pas en tirer des conséquences justes: il cahotait comme une locomotive déraillée.' He is plagued by dualism, the contradictory impulses of the philosopher and the artist, literary and pictorial; his effort to express ideas through his art is thwarted by the disjunction between his 'literary' mind and his 'artistic' *métier*. In this he resembles those philosophical artists discussed in *L'Art philosophique*, who borrow the goals of another art for their own – heretics who create a 'false genre', a 'pictorial art which tries to replace the book', in which 'everything is allegory, allusion, hieroglyphics, rebuses'.<sup>10</sup> Grandville too has 'a morbidly literary mind, always in search of bastard means to introduce his thought into the domain of the plastic arts'.<sup>11</sup> From the perception of dualism, the viewer derives only uneasiness – 'malaise' – fear, confusion, and unintelligibility, as the clash of idea and art permits neither the one nor the other to emerge unscathed: 'il a fini par tomber dans le vide, n'étant tout à fait ni philosophe ni artiste'.<sup>12</sup>

In Benjamin's terms the dualism of allegory corresponds to the experience of modernity itself, as a symptom and result of modern alienation. In its unharmonized separateness and discontinuity, allegory problematizes the mythic appearance of the world, nature, and history, exposing it as a lie. It both speaks and reveals the fragmentation behind the alleged order and causal evolution of history; it represents and exposes the brutal subjection of humanity to the world of nature; it embodies and uncovers the chaos behind the logic of the universe, the arbitrary nature of the systems humanity has constructed to explain it and make it bearable.<sup>13</sup> In the rhetorical tradition traced in the *Trauerspiel* book, allegory partakes of the arbitrary; its signs are ciphers,<sup>14</sup> 'runes', hieroglyphs and rebuses,<sup>15</sup> signatures, monograms, and scripts,<sup>16</sup> with no necessary relation to what they represent. 'Any person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else'.<sup>17</sup> In contrast to the 'indivisible union of form and content', the 'unity of the material and the transcendental object',<sup>18</sup> the 'organic totality',<sup>19</sup> the 'unbroken merging'<sup>20</sup> of beautiful and divine which constitutes the symbol, allegory is disjunctive,<sup>21</sup> atomizing, fragmented;<sup>22</sup> relative to the living entity it is *dissecta membra*,<sup>23</sup> proclaiming the 'false appearance of totality'.<sup>24</sup> Allegory

removes the mask from the transfigured face of nature to show instead nature in decay;<sup>25</sup> history becomes the Passion of the world, a 'petrified, primordial landscape'.<sup>26</sup> As M. Jennings argues, allegory enables human beings to recognize their own alienation, the 'fragmented, oppressive character of history'.<sup>27</sup> In its allegorical designations of objects, baroque literature lacks the inner 'radiance' of transcendence,<sup>28</sup> the forerunner to the famous Benjaminian aura. The allegorical image is not suffused with meaning, but has its meaning placed conspicuously alongside, 'stripping naked' the material objects it represents.<sup>29</sup> Allegory is thus allied with death; it is the 'homeland' of the corpse, the realm of 'dead objects', a world without hope.<sup>30</sup> But in an act of inevitable reversal, this itself becomes an allegory of redemption, the heap of bones the resurrection, the desolation of Golgotha an image of salvation.<sup>31</sup> Allegory destroys the organic so that true meaning may be picked up from its fragments.<sup>32</sup> It is both destructive and revelatory, for it breaks down myths of organicism, totality, and order, reveals the suffering, fragmentation and randomness that the myths are meant to conceal, and suggests an order of experience otherwise hidden from view. The allegorical experience is terrifying, perhaps, but exhilarating and liberating too, free of the illusion that binds and fetters human beings, constrains them in life and delivers them unknowingly to death.

In formal terms, baroque allegory is marked by extravagance,<sup>33</sup> a multiplication, eruption, and piling up of fragmentary images<sup>34</sup> in 'outlandish' and chaotic ways,<sup>35</sup> things metamorphosing uncontrollably into other ones.<sup>36</sup> Such linguistic virtuosity corresponds to its specifically allegorical approach: 'word, symbol, and sound are emancipated from any context of traditional meaning and are flaunted as objects which may be used for allegorical purposes'.<sup>37</sup> With its capital letters, the language of allegory is characterized by pomp,<sup>38</sup> bombast, and material display,<sup>39</sup> prefiguring the study of commodity display in the arcades and world exhibitions that will inform the *Passagen-Werk* generally, and Benjamin's interpretation of Grandville in particular (who occupies the same dossier as 'exhibitions', 'Ausstellungswesen').

Indeed Benjamin affirms frequently the connection between allegory and the commodity, the *Trauerspiel* book and the *Passagen-Werk*.<sup>40</sup> Just as there is, in allegory, no 'natural mediation'<sup>41</sup> between image and meaning, so also the relationship between the commodity and its price. The arbitrariness, substitutability, and changeability of meaning characteristic of allegory define the commodity's price too: the allegorist 'places one piece next to another and tries to make them go together: this meaning with that image, this image with that meaning. . . . No one sung to it [the allegorical

object] in the cradle to which meaning the thoughtfulness of the allegorist would convey it. But once it has acquired such a meaning, one can at any moment exchange this for another one.<sup>42</sup> In what reads as a parody of the famous line from Baudelaire's poem, 'Le Cygne', expressing the disjunction between the rapidly changing city and the poet's melancholy heart, Benjamin writes, 'The modes of meaning change nearly as quickly as the price of commodities.'<sup>43</sup> As a form, allegory corresponds to the commodity fetishism which constitutes the nineteenth-century urban phantasmagoria.<sup>44</sup> The commodity becomes 'a cipher which attracts meanings',<sup>45</sup> an empty vessel into which one's desires and fantasies may be projected. In doing so, however, it also breaks down the illusion of harmonious totality which the phantasmagoria creates, 'dissipates' it,<sup>46</sup> shows the fragmentation and ruins which it conceals.<sup>47</sup> Allegory is the antithesis of myth,<sup>48</sup> and the antidote to it too;<sup>49</sup> it provokes a crisis of the magical aura such as Benjamin describes in the *Work of Art* essay,<sup>50</sup> accomplishing the radical reorientation that cinematic representation does, and according to the same technique of montage. In its separateness and dualism, allegory both reflects and uncovers the myths constructed by bourgeois capitalism, represents and exposes the illusion of organic harmony in the world of modern technology and merchandise.

'Allegory is the armature of the modern'.<sup>51</sup> For Benjamin, the quintessential artist of the modern era was Baudelaire, whose 'allegorical genius' made the commodity an object of his poetry and in so doing exposed it as a commodity, a lifeless object fetishized.<sup>52</sup> In Baudelaire this takes the form especially of the modern city, the heaps of broken images which attempt, like all allegory, to compensate in quantity and variety for arbitrariness and lack of coherence,<sup>53</sup> while at the same time laying this bare – the 'palais neufs, échafaudages, blocs/Vieux faubourgs, tout pour moi devient allégorie' of 'Le Cygne', the Paris of arcades and exhibitions, fashion plates and advertisements, gas lights and *maquillage*, dandies and whores. For Benjamin, the allegories of the Baudelairean metropolis, like those of the *Tableaux parisiens* which express them, expose the phantasmagoria of bourgeois urban life, the kaleidoscopic vision by which the commodity is transfigured into the organic, or even into the sacred – the 'pantheism' and mystical intoxication by which Baudelaire himself characterized the experience of the modern city: 'Le vertige senti dans les grandes villes est analogue au vertige éprouvé au sein de la nature. . . . Ivresse *religieuse* des grandes villes. Panthéisme'.<sup>54</sup> For the Baudelairean flâneur, bombarded by the sights, sounds, and smells of bourgeois capitalism – prostitutes, fashion, the high-life glitter and tawdry estaminets of Constantin Guys, the unending proliferation of the crowd like the poet's terrifying vision

of the seven old men multiplying one out of the other in 'Les Sept Vieillards',<sup>55</sup> the urban treasures which parade before the stroller's eyes like merchandise in the shop windows of Parisian arcades,<sup>56</sup> piles of heavy *souvenirs* like relics reflecting an irretrievable, 'deceased' experience<sup>57</sup> – everything is indeed allegory in Benjamin's sense, representing and proclaiming the lifeless character of the commodity and the illusion of life which it creates.<sup>58</sup> The gaze of the allegorist/flâneur who roams the city is one of alienation,<sup>59</sup> both registering and highlighting the mirage.

Baudelaire's allegory bears, in contradistinction to that of the baroque, traces of a wrath which was necessary, in order to break into this world and lay its harmonious structures in ruins.<sup>60</sup> For Benjamin, Baudelairean allegory exposes the fetishized character of commodities and the phantasmagoria it creates, 'reveals their terrifying and menacing traits', 'tears through the harmonious façade of the world which surrounds him',<sup>61</sup> illuminates the myths and distortions that both define contemporary experience and also obscure and prevent access to a 'genuine' experience. It reveals the mechanization and death to which we are unknowingly subjected behind a veil of organicism and life, the repetition and typification by which the individual becomes a mechanically reproduced 'sosse', the 'always the same' which modernity's aesthetic – or fetish – of the new conceals.<sup>62</sup> To the personification of the commodity effected by the bourgeoisie, Baudelaire responds by trying to 'humanize' it, that is, to reveal its aura.<sup>63</sup> His allegory both represents the myth and keeps him from succumbing to it.<sup>64</sup> This allegory disfigures the world of the commodity, rather than transfiguring it; the commodity thus 'attempts to look itself in the face'.<sup>65</sup> It is both 'regressive' and 'progressive', refusing to abolish its object completely while dismantling it at the same time.<sup>66</sup> It has a violence, a 'destructive furor', which dissipates the illusory appearances by which reality, or a certain ideology, seeks to make itself acceptable, perpetuate itself, and extend its influence.<sup>67</sup> The gesture is sudden, 'brusque', and revolutionary: as Benjamin states elsewhere, Baudelaire's technique is that of the putsch.<sup>68</sup>

To the impotent wrath of Baudelaire corresponds the more active 'graphic sadism' of Grandville.<sup>69</sup> What in Baudelaire remains at the level of a symptom becomes the very purpose of Grandville's art. If, as Baudelaire maintained, Grandville's allegory is plagued by dualism, this was for Benjamin precisely the point. For him, Grandville's allegorical art expresses the fragmentation, commodification, and dehumanization of experience in capitalist culture, takes it to the extreme and thus demystifies it, 'reveals its nature'.<sup>70</sup> This sadism humiliates the object and satisfies it as well, and does likewise to the public he addresses.<sup>71</sup> It brings out the auratic

'glitter' surrounding the commodity as Baudelaire's allegory does too.<sup>72</sup> 'Grandville's fantasies transfer commodity-character onto the universe. They modernize it':<sup>73</sup> his is indeed a world of proliferating, self-generating commodities metamorphosing one into the other, commodities which multiply to fill every earthly and heavenly space. The full title of *Un Autre Monde* reflects this linguistically, its proliferation of terms – including some very nineteenth-century neologisms, verbal equivalents of the specialty terms and *nouveautés* represented in the work itself – springing from one another like Grandville's protean images: 'Un Autre Monde/ Transformations, visions, incarnations, ascensions, locomotions, explorations, pérégrinations, excursions, stations, Cosmogonies, fantasmagories, rêveries, folâtreries, facéties, lubies, Métamorphoses, zoomorphoses, lithomorphoses, métempsycoses, apothéoses et autres choses'. His allegorical method points up the myth of life hiding this *chosisme*, and reveals the bourgeois fantasies to which the commodity responds.

Replete with the techniques of baroque allegory, Grandville's art personifies objects and objectifies persons, raising the commodity to the level of the human and reducing the human to the mechanical and lifeless.<sup>74</sup> In the highly inventive and imaginative creations of *Un Autre Monde*, objects take on life, living things become objects, and a visual synecdoche and metonymy translate the fetishes of a culture. The other worlds to which the protagonists travel – through the heavens, to the depths of the sea, and across the earth – are peopled by the latest technological inventions and the most futuristic inhabitants. In 'Les Métamorphoses du sommeil' (figure 2), the fantasized, ever-elusive woman emerges from a metamorphic process leading from bird, to bow and quiver, to spindle, to cup and ball game, to flower, to her human form; as her image fades away, the train of her dress trails off into a bouquet of flowers and ends in the symbolic coils of a serpent. In 'Concert à la vapeur' (figure 3), mechanical, steam-powered instruments are depicted as human beings, their heads and faces rendered through clouds of steam: the legs of a cellist on the left are those of his chair, the musician's body on the right is that of his trombone and his arm a mechanical zig-zag attached to the slide, the orchestra conductor in the center is a clock marking time. The text says: 'Dans ce siècle de progrès, la machine est un homme perfectionné'.<sup>75</sup> The program includes the opera 'Les Rails-Notes', the polonaise 'Les Wagons sautés par eux-mêmes', and the symphony 'La Locomotive'.<sup>76</sup> An ophicleide, the featured performer of this modern orchestra, is a monstrous, squatting beast at center-stage (figure 4). Elsewhere in the book, action becomes mechanized into repetition, as vehicles follow endlessly the same route and people make the same gestures.<sup>77</sup>



Figure 2. Les métamorphoses du sommeil.

In one of Grandville's most frequent techniques, the cosmos is explained in banal human terms. In one example, the sun and moon are an uncongenial *ménage*, sleeping in separate beds, their marital infidelities hardly a well-kept secret (figure 5). Madame Moon rises and dresses for her day, sensuously attaching her garter to her curvaceous legs, while the sun blows out his candle for the night. But they must meet from time to time to keep up appearances, hence the 'Solar Eclipse' (figure 6). This bourgeois romance is avidly observed by its earthly audience, themselves converted into commodities, the new astronomical instruments they employ; and in a further twist, these are reinscribed into the organic world by their likeness to insects. Similarly, Venus the evening star is depicted as the glittering jewel adorning the hair of a nineteenth-century human Venus taking the evening air on her wrought-iron balcony (figure 7). Human inventions are not only personified, but take on cosmic proportions: a lightning rod is depicted as a tall, thin man smoking a pipe, who easily catches the lightning bolt – itself represented as an 'electric acrobat' performing his tricks on the rooftops of the town – and extinguishes it in a bucket of water (fig-



Figure 3. Concert à la vapeur.

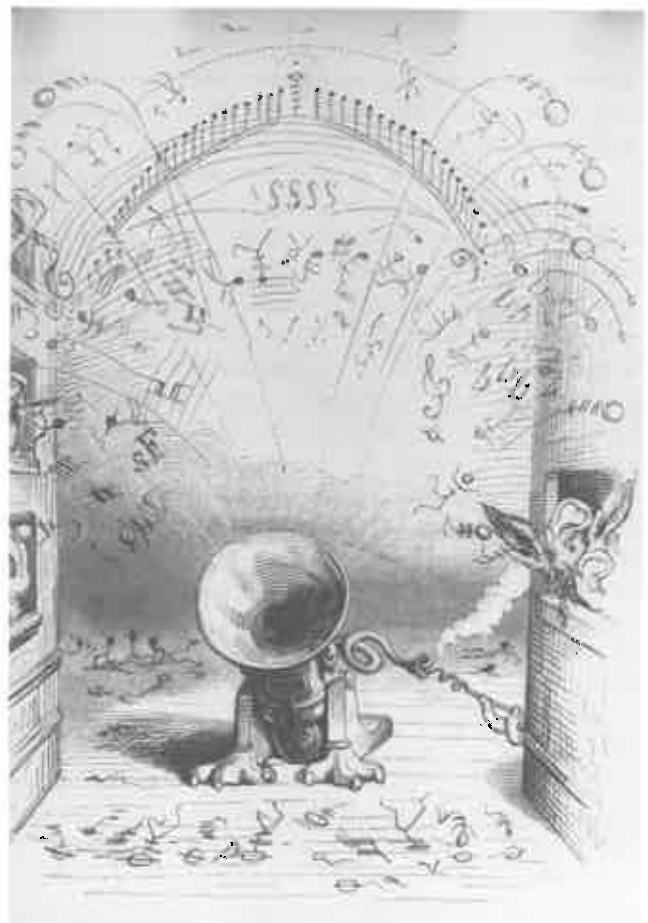


Figure 4. Plusieurs dilettanti ont les oreilles déchirées.



Figure 5. Une éclipse conjugale: vous n'ignorez point que le soleil et la lune ne font pas bon ménage.



Figure 6. Une éclipse conjugale: c'est grande fête aujourd'hui dans le ciel.



Figure 7. Vénus à son balcon.

ure 8). As in baroque allegory, words are wrenched from the context of their traditional meanings, and translated literally, reifying both language and the idea it should express, here the political cliché: 'Aujourd'hui le niveau social est synonyme de compression' (figure 9).<sup>78</sup> The living person is fetishized into its constituent parts, true to the allegorical obsession with dismemberment and the fragmented body: a twirling ballerina, decked out in madapollam trimmed with tinsel, silver foil wings, and a crown of similar, is, for the erotic fantasies of her appreciative audience, all legs (figure 10); the indiscriminating audience is a synecdoche of clapping hands, literally 'sans yeux, sans esprit', and therefore 'sans goût';<sup>79</sup> hearts, coins, and crowns frame the scene, suggesting her commercial success, and translating their appreciation into commercial terms. The public is also represented metonymically by the censer with which it makes offering to the goddess/prima ballerina, and by a bouquet of flowers it will toss to her. In 'Vénus à l'Opéra' (figure 11), the gawking, avid audience is literally 'all eyes' ('Aussitôt tous les yeux se tournèrent de son côté'<sup>80</sup>), ogling the goddess in the opera box, her head displayed like some parodic ancient bust.

'The universal exhibitions are the pilgrimage centers of the fetish Commodity',<sup>81</sup> where the commodity gave itself to be admired and adored, substituting in the viewing public an appreciation of exchange value for a knowledge of use value. Benjamin quotes Otto Rühle's discussion of Marx's concept of commodity fetishism in this regard,<sup>82</sup> the 'metaphysical subtleties and theologi-

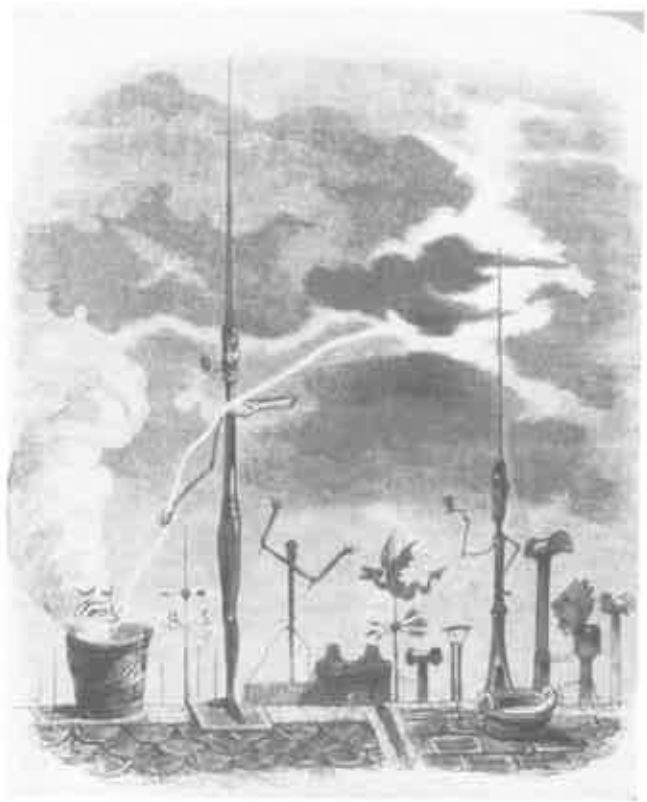


Figure 8. L'été avait choisi ce lieu pour y fabriquer ses tonnerres.

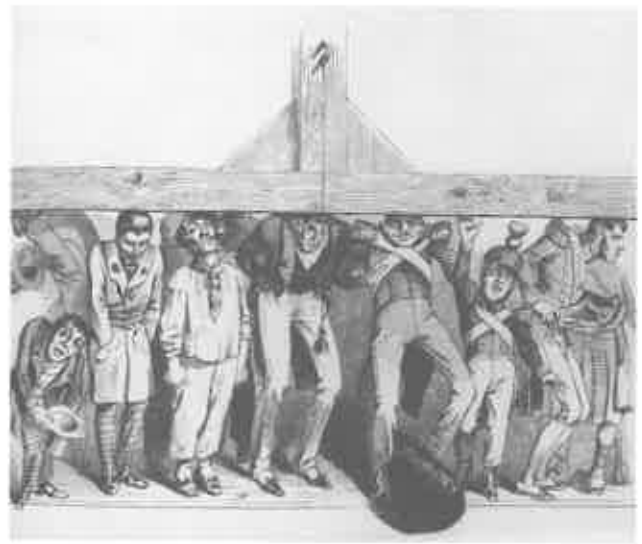


Figure 9. Aujourd'hui le niveau social est synonyme de compression.

cal niceties' of the seemingly simple, even trivial object of merchandise: no longer a product of human industry, the commodity defined through its exchange value takes on its own life, acquires autonomous power, becomes a





Figure 10. Apocalypse du ballet.



Figure 11. Vénus à l'opéra.

quasi-religious idol, absorbing the life and soul of the worker as he himself becomes correspondingly more mechanized.<sup>83</sup> Separated from the human labor which created it, it is free to rule over that same humanity.<sup>84</sup> For Benjamin, the universal exhibitions are the space of this phantasmagoria and distraction, and thus of subjection to industrial and political manipulation and propaganda.<sup>85</sup> He quotes accounts comparing the exhi-

bit halls to pagan temples.<sup>86</sup> The universal exhibitions create a brave new dream-world – *un autre monde* – for the alienated and self-alienated modern subject, constructing a world of commodities to hide the world in ruins that marks the crisis of contemporary history.

Grandville's playful inventions express these 'theological niceties' of the commodity, translate its magical character and make overt its sleight of hand.<sup>87</sup> The 'sorcerer' of the fetish-commodity,<sup>88</sup> Grandville controls, and represents satirically, the process of transfiguration. Benjamin applies to Grandville's technique the same term – *Spitzfindigkeit* – by which Marx designates the metaphysical power of the commodity.<sup>89</sup> Grandville's craftiness thus corresponds to the commodity's own, and is a good match for it as well. 'When Grandville represents a new fan as the fan of Iris, when he presents the Milky Way as an avenue illuminated by gas lamps at night, when "la lune peinte par elle-même" lies not on clouds but on plush cushions of the latest fashion, then history is just as ruthlessly secularised and integrated into the context of nature as allegory accomplished three hundred years earlier'.<sup>90</sup> Grandville shows the process by which modern history is validated: it appears a result of nature itself.

The cosmic 'other world' is indeed permeated by the commodity, as the stylish chandelier announcing it on the title page of *Un Autre Monde* suggests (figure 12): the moon's plush cloud-cushion with its gold tassels, the shimmering fabric and embroidered pleats of Iris's scarf hung out in the sunshine, the gas lamps which light up the galaxy (figures 13–15). And nature imitates the commodity itself: 'Que sont, en effet, ses plantes marines, sinon une reproduction exacte des dentelles, guipures, brosses, écrans, aigrettes, épauettes, pompons, panaches, toupets, perruques et gazons?'<sup>91</sup> The fountain in the square is made of glass and 'se mouvait comme le jet d'une pendule à ressort'<sup>92</sup> – a dream realized a

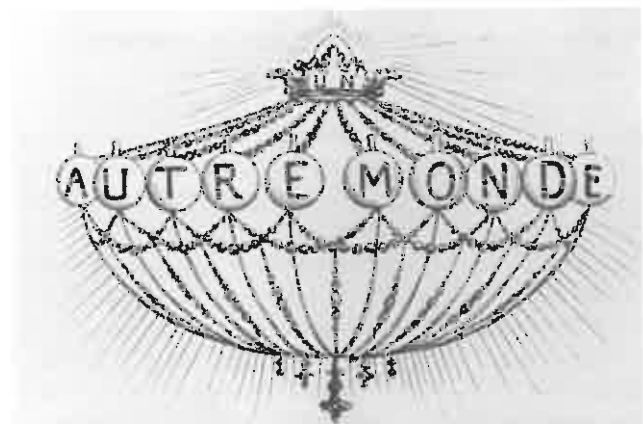


Figure 12. Title page vignette, *Un Autre Monde*.



Figure 13. La lune peinte par elle-même.

few years later by the large glass fountain at the Crystal Palace.<sup>93</sup>

The same principles are at work in advertising: 'Grandville's works are the sibylline books of publicity. Everything which in him exists in the form of a joke, of satire, reaches its true development as advertising'.<sup>94</sup> Advertising is the 'ruse by which dream imposes itself on industry'.<sup>95</sup> Benjamin cites numerous nineteenth-century advertisements which transform the commodity into the divine or the organic, or project it onto the cosmos in the manner of Grandville: 'Yes, long live Vienna beer! . . . It is divine beer . . . clear like a poet's thought, light as a swallow, firm and loaded with spirits like the pen of a German philosopher. It goes down like pure spring water, it refreshes like ambrosia'.<sup>96</sup> In analyzing the hyperbole of advertising, he quotes a newspaper notice about a fabric shop whose 11,000 kilometers of material exceed the entire railway system of France: 'This single store could thus erect with its fabric a kind of tent over all the railway lines of France, which would be very pleasant, notably in the summer, during the hot weather'.<sup>97</sup> The book from which Benjamin takes this cites advertising's rhetoric of the gigantic ('La Ville de Paris, le plus grand magasin de la capitale', 'La Chaussée d'Antin, le plus grand magasin de l'Eu-



Figure 14. L'éventail d'Iris.

rope', 'Le Coin de Rue, le plus grand magasin du monde'), which goes even beyond the limits of the earthly sphere to take the universe as its domain: 'Les Magasins du Louvre, les plus grands magasins de l'Univers'.<sup>98</sup> In another example, he cites a fantastic scheme from a utopian text of 1835 (*Victoria! Eine neue Welt*) to derive energy from the hydrogen gas issuing from snow-filled craters of extinct volcanoes, and relates it to the new use of natural gas: 'This fantasy of a madman amounts, under the influence of the new invention, to an advertisement for gas lighting in the comical cosmic style of Grandville'.<sup>99</sup>

The Grandville section was clearly meant to explore this 'connection between advertising and the cosmic'<sup>100</sup> as part of the urban phantasmagoria. While advertising seeks to veil the commodity character of things,<sup>101</sup> Grandville lays this bare. His art follows the same allegorical principle, but takes it to its extremes, and thus 'reveals its nature'. Of 'Le Pont des planètes' (see figure 1), Benjamin writes: 'L'anneau de Saturne devient pour lui un balcon en fer forgé où les habitants de Saturne prennent l'air à la tombée de la nuit. De la même façon un balcon en fer forgé représenterait à l'exposition universelle l'anneau de Saturne et ceux qui s'y avancent se verraient entraînés dans une fantasmagorie où ils se sentent mués en habitants de Saturne'.<sup>102</sup> Thus the universe becomes a banal bourgeois world,





Figure 15. Promenade d'une comète.

and the bourgeois world is raised to the level of the universal.<sup>103</sup> This is the dream of technology too: Benjamin quotes an account of the gas lamps in the Passage Colbert, which compares them to 'autant de comètes en ordre de bataille, attendant le signal du départ pour aller vagabonder dans l'espace', and relates this 'transformation of the city into the heavens' to *Un Autre Monde*.<sup>104</sup> Indeed, in 'Promenade d'une comète' (figure 15), where the progress of a comet across the sky is depicted as a lady parading down a gaslit avenue in a fashionable evening dress with a long train, Grandville fills the heavens with commodities and new technological inventions, projects the bourgeois ideal onto the universe, and also images the fantasies created by fashion – the divinization of woman.

The expansion of the bourgeois world to the dimensions of the cosmos applies to the city itself, as Benjamin's quotation from Rattier's 1857 *Paris n'existe pas* suggests: 'Un de ces quatre matins, la France réveillée tombera de son haut en se voyant emprisonnée dans l'enceinte de Lutèce . . . Le lendemain l'Italie, l'Espagne,

le Danemark et la Russie seront incorporés par décret au municipe parisien; trois jours après les barrières seront reculées jusqu'à la Nouvelle-Zemble et à la Terre des Papouas. Paris sera le monde, et l'univers sera Paris. . . . Ce n'est rien encore, Paris montera sur les nues, escaladera les cieus des cieus, se fera des faubourgs des planètes et des étoiles'.<sup>105</sup> This is the fantasy of Haussmann's 'megalomaniacal' vision of Paris too,<sup>106</sup> a city embodying the imperialist objectives of the Second Empire, and the dream of self-expansion and self-eternalization of its dominant class.<sup>107</sup> In an example from Arsène Houssaye's vision of Paris in the year 2855, 'Le Paris futur', the city becomes the financial center of the universe itself, where speculators from the planet Mercury make deals with those of the Great Bear, and the planet Venus is placed on the stock exchange: 'Les hôtes qui nous viennent de Saturne et Mars oublièrent en débarquant ici les horizons de la planète maternelle! Paris est désormais la métropole de la création! . . . Les capitalistes de la Grande-Ourse discutent avec les agioteurs de Mercure! On vient de mettre aujourd'hui même en actions les débris de Vénus à moitié incendiée par ses propres flammes!'<sup>108</sup>

*Un Autre Monde* contains many other examples of commodification, although Benjamin does not discuss them all. For instance, it deals explicitly with the power of advertising to turn the unique and ingenious into a multiplication of replicas. One of the heroes, who had been an inventor, laments 'c'est la réclame qui m'a tué': through advertising, too many people had discovered his secret, which thus entered the public domain.<sup>109</sup> In another example, Grandville satirizes the commodification of literature, as feuilletons are reeled off and cut up like macaroni (figure 16): a retort marked 'esprit' feeds into a dish of noodles labeled 'style macaronique'; the string of pasta in the foreground is marked 'feuilleton. La suite à . . .'. Elsewhere a mass media pump floods the city with a torrent of papers, pamphlets, and advertisements, 'prospectus', 'revues', 'illustrations', 'annonces', and 'spécimens' (figure 17).

Benjamin was especially interested in Grandville's treatment of fashion as a model of the commodity overall. Fashion operates according to the same fetishism as the commodity, the 'sex-appeal of the inorganic'.<sup>110</sup> As the 'cosmogony' of fashion,<sup>111</sup> Grandville's work recounts the myth according to which fashion is invested with divinity: 'Fashion prescribes the ritual by which the fetish Commodity wants to be worshipped. Grandville extends fashion's claims to the objects of everyday use as well as to the cosmos. In pursuing it to its extremes, he reveals its nature. It stands in opposition to the organic. It couples the living body to the inorganic world. Relative to the living, fashion protects the rights of the corpse.'<sup>112</sup> Grandville indeed depicted the



Figure 16. La littérature sort toute faite d'un d'évidoir, comme une étoffe de soie ou de coton.

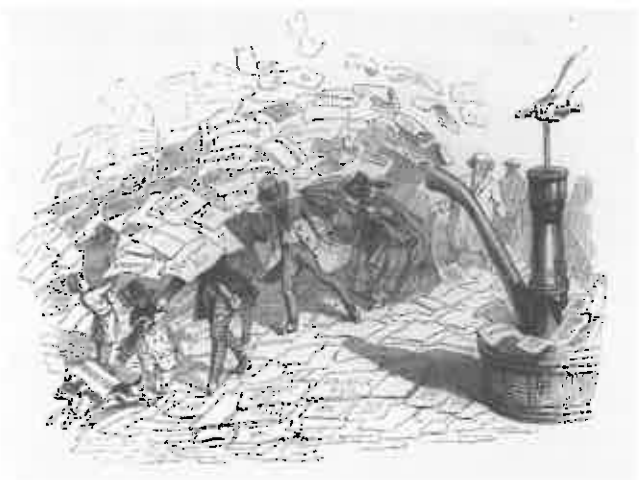


Figure 17. Une pompe aspirante qui crache les catalogues des publications.

reduction of people to items of fashion, the subjection of the living body to the inorganic (figure 18). The text reads: 'Que vois-je sur la chaussée? Des brodequins qui se promènent, des cannes qui portent haut la tête en donnant le bras à des capotes; des bottes marchent crânement le chapeau sur l'oreille.' Grandville's fashion allegorically substitutes heaps of commodities to hide, and thus to proclaim, the disappearance of the person: 'Robes, coiffures, écharpes, diamants, tout ce qui résume la beauté de luxe ou la réputation de la personne, est au rendez-vous; *elle seule est absente* . . . A quoi bon du reste la personne? On ne va là que pour voir des habits.



Figure 18. A quoi bon du reste la personne?

C'est en songeant aux solennités de la mode, que le prophète s'est écrié: "Mannequin des mannequins, et tout n'est que mannequin".<sup>113</sup> The essence of the individual is literally taken over by fashion: 'Dis-moi qui t'habille, et je te dirai qui tu es'.<sup>114</sup> It represents the increasing mechanization of the human, the reduction of the individual to a replica following the law of the type, that Benjamin sees as a mark of modernity: 'Il paraît que dans ce pays la mode est de se faire représenter dans les promenades publiques par des sosies en plâtre, en bois ou en cire. On fait de l'élégance en effigie'.<sup>115</sup> And fashion advertising and display, with its use of mannequins or of no human form at all, is merely the realization of fashion's own dehumanization: 'J'ai beau regarder à travers les stores des équipages, je n'aperçois que des perruques ou des chapeaux sur des têtes de bois; . . . Les tailleurs, les chapeliers, les bottiers, les modistes, ont trouvé le moyen de supprimer l'homme qui leur servait d'enseigne vivante. La réclame s'est simplifiée en se perfectionnant'.<sup>116</sup> The irony of this last remark underlines the problem of advertising's 'progress', which by eliminating the person eventually brings about its own self-destruction.

In Grandville's 'war between fashion and nature',<sup>117</sup> nature is not only refigured in terms of the commodity, but the commodity also validates and justifies itself through its contact with nature. This is a standard stratagem of fashion, as Benjamin's numerous examples attest: sleeves like wings or gills, an evening gown entitled 'Riverbank in Springtime', hairdressings of flowers which give 'the illusion of being the work of nature itself'.<sup>118</sup> He cites a passage from Apollinaire's *Le Poète assassiné* in which matter from the various parts of nature contributes to a woman's costume, a kind of modern Arcimboldo: a dress made of cork or scallop shells, hats adorned with fish bones, shoes and gloves with feathers, hats made of crystal, and so on.<sup>119</sup>

Conversely, it is an ideal of fashion to turn the body into the inorganic too: a cosmetic makes a woman's skin like rose-colored taffeta, a dress turns her into a piece of upholstered furniture.<sup>120</sup> Fashion provides the link between woman and the commodity, turning her into a commodity. In the Apollinaire quotation cited above, Benjamin notes the image of a woman wearing a dress covered with mirrors – a walking gold mine in the sun, a silver mine in the rain.<sup>121</sup> Benjamin likens the fetishistic representation of the organic body as an agglomeration of commodities to the segmented detailing of female beauty, element by element, in baroque poetry. Both 'depend on the image of the corpse. And this dismemberment of female beauty into its praiseworthy components resembles a dissection, and the popular comparisons of parts of the body to alabaster, snow, precious stones, or other generally inorganic products do even more'.<sup>122</sup> Fashion is a parody of the corpse, its ceaseless changing an effort to defeat death, or to conceal its flirtatious alliance with it.<sup>123</sup>

Like the commodity, fashion represents the bourgeois aspiration to the eternal and the cosmic, a pretention which Grandville ridicules mercilessly. In 'La Roue de la mode' (figure 19), fashion is depicted as the goddess Fortune, determining the order of the universe, towering above the puny human subjects who gaze anxiously up at her and watch her every turn. Her wheel, with its dates and corresponding styles of hat, represents fashion's trick of offering the 'ever-the-same' in the form of the new – its primary means of keeping hold of its power: 'Muscadins, incroyables, dandys, fashionables, lions, se sont succédé sans diminuer en rien sa puissance. Ce sont toujours les mêmes ridicules sous d'autres habits.'<sup>124</sup> The strategies by which bourgeois ideology proclaims its cosmic significance and claims its universal authority are thus revealed for what they are.

The counterweight to Grandville's satirical, allegorical treatment of the commodity is the cosmological phantasmagoria of Blanqui. To Grandville's ever-proliferating objects and metamorphic forms, to his wheel of fashion which comes ever full circle, correspond Blanqui's 'sossies', a repetition which exposes the illusion of the new as an eternal return of the same.<sup>125</sup> Imprisoned for conspiracy in the grim Fort du Taureau, assaulted day and night by unrelenting noise, cut off from all communication and fighting off madness, Blanqui formulated his vision of the eternal recurrence in *L'Eternité par les astres*, to which Benjamin devotes the conclusion of the revised 1939 exposé. The work was meant as a critique of bourgeois pride, and particularly the myth of progress it inspires: 'Toujours et partout, dans le camp terrestre, le même drame, le même décor, sur la même scène étroite, une humanité bruyante, infatuée de sa grandeur, se croyant l'univers et vivant dans sa prison



Figure 19. La mode.

comme dans une immensité ... Même monotonie, même immobilisme dans les astres étrangers. L'univers se répète sans fin et piaffe sur place. L'éternité joue imperturbablement dans l'infini les mêmes représentations.'<sup>126</sup> In Blanqui's system, the finite number of nature's resources means that there will necessarily result a finite number of possibilities to its forms, which, however, repeat themselves *ad infinitum* in the cosmos.<sup>127</sup> This debunks the myth of progress, but in Benjamin's view substitutes a myth of its own, that of self-eternalization, 'contemporary life eternalized', the frightening, and yet still flattering, image of ourselves immortalized, our own existence proliferating like mass-produced articles.<sup>128</sup> It thus manifests the same self-projection of contemporary society onto the cosmos<sup>129</sup> that Grandville's caricatures mock. And there lies the difference between the two: for Benjamin, Grandville's vision is penetrated with irony, Blanqui's is not. Blanqui's infernal cosmic vision of endless repetition is a submission to that very society it condemns. Its critical force lies in the violence

of the condemnation, a violence that 'shakes the throne' of the bourgeois while kneeling before it at the same time.<sup>130</sup> 'The cosmic vision of the world that Blanqui there outlines, in which he takes his particulars from the mechanistic "natural science" of bourgeois society, is an infernal one – and at the same time a complement to the society which Blanqui, at the end of his life, was compelled to recognize as the victor over him. The unnerving thing is that this scheme lacks all irony. It is an unconditional submission, but at the same time the most terrible indictment of that society, which projects this image of the cosmos as its own self-projection onto the heavens.'<sup>131</sup> Blanqui's lack of irony keeps his vision in the realm of phantasmagoria, despite its critical possibilities: it has the unreflective repetition and fatality characteristic of myth,<sup>132</sup> keeps human life under the sign of the auratic,<sup>133</sup> and ends in hopeless, and perhaps futile, resignation.

As the *Trauerspiel* book had already suggested, without developing the point, irony is a variant of the allegorical.<sup>134</sup> In their dualism, Grandville's allegories have the irony lacking in Blanqui, taking commodification to the extreme in order to expose and dismantle it.<sup>135</sup> Benjamin quotes an article on Grandville which distinguishes his fantasies from the phantasmagorical creations of Walt Disney: the latter contain no mortification, while Grandville always contains the presence of death.<sup>136</sup> The constant presence of death allies his technique with that of the dialectical image and the task of the historian, turning the mythic, organic commodity into a petrified corpse, a ruin of the kind that the historian finds in the rubble of history.<sup>137</sup>

'The first edition of Toussenel's "L'Esprit des bêtes" appeared in 1847',<sup>138</sup> precisely the year of Grandville's death. Benjamin brings out the utopian element of Grandville's works through his indeed startling resemblance to this disciple of Fourier and proponent of universal analogy.<sup>139</sup> Like Grandville, Toussenel allegorically relates the human to the animal and vegetable worlds.<sup>140</sup> He categorizes toys and children's games according to the geometric shapes which they most closely approximate. Benjamin notes the connection between Grandville's personified forms and Toussenel's anthropomorphized descriptions: 'In the section on the [hyperbola] the following text comes especially close to Grandville. "L'hyperbole est la courbe de l'ambition. . . . Admirez la persistance opiniâtre de l'ardente asymptote, poursuivant l'hyperbole d'une course échevelée; elle approche, elle approche toujours du but . . . mais elle ne l'atteint pas."<sup>141</sup> With Toussenel fashion invades the natural sciences: animals are dressed up in the *dernière mode*, as in Grandville's 'Arche nouvelle' (figure 20). Toussenel has the same cosmological scope as Grandville, transforming the heavens according to the human



Figure 20. Une arche nouvelle.

world, and infusing the human world with the qualities of the cosmos. In an example similar to Grandville's 'Solar eclipse' (see figure 6), Toussenel writes: 'L'éclair est le baiser des nuages. . . . Deux amants qui s'adorent et qui veulent se le dire en dépit de tous les obstacles, sont deux nuages animés d'électricités contraires . . .'<sup>142</sup> and describes the love of the earth and sun, like Grandville's *ménage* of sun and moon (see figure 5): 'Comme l'amant qui se pare de ses plus beaux habits . . . ainsi chaque matin la Terre revêt ses plus riches atours pour courir au-devant des rayons de l'astre aimé'.<sup>143</sup> The rotation of the earth is described as a frenzied waltz, similar to Grandville's technique in 'Promenade d'une comète' (see figure 15), or the waltz of the stars around the planets, and the galop of the comets at a ball held at Urania's described in *Un Autre Monde*. And Toussenel's comparison of a pretty young lady to a voltaic battery recalls Grandville's image of the lightning rod (see figure 8), transforming the human world according to the latest technological inventions.<sup>144</sup>

In preserving and highlighting in a single allegorical image both the utopian origin of modernity and its degradation through commodification, Grandville's works consistently provide the radical confrontation of the 'fore- and after-life of the object' which characterizes

the dialectical image.<sup>145</sup> They go beyond nineteenth-century utopian imagery by thwarting its mythic tendency, its propensity to become a tool of a single, dominant class, to slide into ideology, and thus to prevent the realization of a 'true' utopia.<sup>146</sup> With their allegorical dualism, their coexistent cynical and utopian elements, the unmistakable presence of death within the ever-new, they constitute their object historically, carrying out the kind of confrontation between past and present that the historian does, wrenching the object out of its mythical context into a confrontation with the present, 'blasting' it, as the 1940 *Theses on History* say, out of the continuum of history.<sup>147</sup> Like the historical materialist, Grandville's images of fashion show time standing still within seemingly ceaseless change.<sup>148</sup> Grandville occupies a singular place in Benjamin's scheme, for not only are his works used dialectically to shed light on the present, but they themselves border on the dialectical, providing an image of the dream-as-promise and of the dream-as-class fantasy. Thus his images of the humanization of the heavens reflect mankind's primitive dream of harmony with the cosmos,<sup>149</sup> but also reveal its degradation into the 'consumerist' desire to colonize, possess, and dominate. While the dialectical image, unlike allegory, constitutes the historical object in the present,<sup>150</sup> Grandville's works provide that first radical shock to the object *within* its history, marking it irrevocably, as it were, for the historian-chiffonnier's pile a century before the fact.<sup>151</sup> Grandville accomplishes the task of the historian, becoming an interpreter of dreams, seeing the dream as such,<sup>152</sup> perceiving the monuments of a class as ruins 'even before they have crumbled'.<sup>153</sup>

*Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth-Century*, Benjamin's own historical project, seems to do likewise. The title of the *Passagen-Werk*'s exposés reflects the same ironic cosmological expansivity as Grandville's images. Indeed the exposés follow more an allegorical than a dialectical procedure, representing the phantasmagoria *as* phantasmagoria, with no overt reference to the present. From early on, Benjamin intended to underline more clearly the relation of his historical objects to the present, and thus to move his allegory toward the dialectical image ('Analogous to the book on the seventeenth-century baroque, but more clearly illuminated by the present, should be the approach here for the nineteenth century'),<sup>154</sup> but in practice this was not carried out. Of his own identification with the allegorical artist there can be no doubt. The finished work was meant to have the separateness of allegory (Benjamin notes the importance of the intervals and distances between its parts),<sup>155</sup> heaping up quotations like the accumulation of images in the allegories of baroque poetry, Baudelaire, and Grandville, pasting them together without quotation marks in a kind of 'literary montage' of fragments,<sup>156</sup>

having the discontinuity and intermittence of film.<sup>157</sup> Adorno, in a famous letter on 'The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire', criticized Benjamin for the same disconnectedness that Baudelaire had the 'allegorical' Grandville – a lack of mediation such as Benjamin had himself attributed to allegory in the *Trauerspiel* book.<sup>158</sup>

And yet if Benjamin was thus an 'allegorical' artist like Grandville, Baudelaire's original critique of the latter must give us pause, for it had a further, crucial dimension: 'Il a fini par tomber dans le vide, n'étant tout à fait ni philosophe ni artiste'. The allegorical disjunction which Baudelaire perceived in Grandville may not only have commented on bourgeois history, as Benjamin maintained, but may also have been the *victim* of it, marking the pressure of modern capitalist culture upon the individual, the subject's collapse and annihilation under the weight of commodified experience – the vengeful power of the mythic. Indeed despite his defense of Grandville's allegorical 'schism', Benjamin seems to have recognized this and acknowledged, if not endorsed, the force and implications of Baudelaire's critique. 'He ended in madness': the 1935 exposé contained this stark, unexplained, unmediated remark, echoing Baudelaire's 'il est tombé dans le vide'.

Benjamin's study of Grandville thus suggests a particular conception of history, history as a juxtaposition and a tension between revolutionary action – charging fragments of the past with explosive potential – and the persistent threat of the mythic.<sup>159</sup> An allegorical history thus constitutes that 'moment of danger' in which the past may be articulated historically, as Benjamin puts it in the *Theses*.<sup>160</sup> Revolution may in fact depend on an allegorical dynamic, balancing demystification with the menacing presence of myth, the lurking danger of phantasmagoria, the *real* perils of the 'unreal' dream-world constructed by ideology for the purposes of domination and manipulation. If, as the *Theses* state, a Messianic history may free us from myth, Benjamin's passionate, ever-increasing interest in ambivalent, ambiguous figures such as Grandville, Baudelaire, and Blanqui suggests that such an allegorical vision was never very far away, exploding the myth and recognizing its ongoing threat, exposing the delusion and acknowledging the danger of recurrence, destroying the staged 'course of things' to find a new way while aware that 'everything can go wrong'.<sup>161</sup> In the context of revolution, the catastrophe is always imminent.<sup>162</sup> As even the *Theses* acknowledge, the enemy – that is, conformism, the threat of becoming a tool of the ruling ideology – has continued to be victorious.<sup>163</sup>

'The events which surround the historian, and in which he takes part, are to be at the basis of his account like a text written in invisible ink.'<sup>164</sup> Benjamin's study of Grandville may indeed include, and illuminate, his

own historical situation in this way. Although he omitted the mention of Grandville's fall into madness from the French exposé of 1939, its implications could not be so easily erased. The commodification of the universe which Grandvillean allegory both effects and uncovers could yet overwhelm the allegorist too. On 26 September 1940, at the age of forty-eight, in possession of a visa for America, Benjamin committed suicide in the Spanish border-town of Port-Bou, his attempt to flee Nazi-occupied France thwarted by a bureaucratic hitch: transit papers identifying the bearer as 'sans nationalité' were for once, and contrary to regular practice, refused by the Spanish authorities, the order to do so having come from Madrid that very day.<sup>165</sup> 'Dans une situation sans issue, je n'ai d'autre choix que d'en finir. C'est dans un petit village dans les Pyrénées où personne ne me connaît ma vie va s'achever'.<sup>166</sup> Benjamin's last words are heavy with a sense of the inevitable.

But the perception of events as irresistible belongs, as Buck-Morss says in a different context, to the mythic.<sup>167</sup> As the 'quintessence' of the modern,<sup>168</sup> 'the only heroic act . . . which remained to the multitudes malades of the city in times of reaction',<sup>169</sup> suicide may have the dualism of Grandvillean allegory, encompassing both the phantasmagoria and its overthrow, acknowledging in its very refusal the dangerous survivability, the *real* power of the mythic. Grandville's madness recalls the lurking presence of the mythic in even the most critical allegory. Perhaps Benjamin's action does likewise.<sup>170</sup> The dandy-like detachment of the destructive character may not always be maintained; suicide may sometime be 'worth the trouble'.<sup>171</sup> Just as revolution itself can become the victim of modernity's mythic eternal recurrence, as Arno Münster has argued<sup>172</sup> – 1830, 1839, 1848, 1870, 1871 – so the most allegorical history may fall victim to the ancient myth of fate. Benjamin's action suggests the extent to which a demystified, allegorical history, history laid bare in the fortuitousness and unpredictability of its events, might yet be perilous and unbearable, revealing the terrible power of the mythic, which allegory unveils but might not succeed in banishing.

#### NOTES

- 1 – *Das Passagen-Werk*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* (henceforth *GS*), ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1982), V, 51. Apart from the exposés, notes for the *Passagen-Werk* will be referred to by dossier and number, following Benjamin's classification; all are printed in *GS* V. I would like to take this occasion to thank the organizers and participants of the colloquium 'Walter Benjamin und die Kunst', held in Frankfurt am Main in July 1992, at which a version of this article was first presented.
- 2 – *Un Autre Monde* (Paris: H. Fournier, 1844). Grandville appears in the 'Erste Notizen: Pariser Passagen I' (M<sup>o</sup>3, *GS* V, 1022).
- 3 – Thus, in 1935: 'Fourier, or the Arcades', 'Daguerre, or the Panoramas', 'Grandville, or the Universal Exhibitions', 'Louis-

Philippe, or the Interior', 'Baudelaire, or the Streets of Paris', 'Haussmann, or the Barricades'. The 1939 version eliminates the Daguerre chapter, its material having been largely taken up by the essay on 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'.

4 – 'Le monde dominé par ses fantasmagories, c'est – pour nous servir de l'expression de Baudelaire – la modernité' (*GS* V, 77).

5 – Notes G 16, 3 and G 16, 4 were intended for the never-completed third section of the Baudelaire book, under the rubric 'eternal return'. See the plan published by Michel Espagne and Michael Werner, 'Vom Passagen-Projekt zum "Baudelaire"'. *Neue Handschriften zum Spätwerk Walter Benjamins*, *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaften und Geistesgeschichte*, 4 (1984), pp. 593–657. The authors elsewhere note the discrepancy between the size of dossier G and the small percentage of it (10%) which Benjamin planned to use for the Baudelaire book. See 'Les Manuscrits parisiens de Walter Benjamin et le Passagen-Werk', in *Walter Benjamin et Paris*, ed. Heinz Wismann (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1986), pp. 849–882, esp. p. 862 (henceforth *Walter Benjamin et Paris*).

6 – *GS* V, 1168.

7 – The massive bibliography on Benjamin contains little on Grandville. Richard Faber discusses him as the 'emblematicist of the metropolis of consumption' in 'Paris, das Rom des XIX. Jahrhunderts. Eine Metacollage', in Norbert W. Bolz and Richard Faber, eds., *Antike und Moderne: Zu Walter Benjamins "Passagen"* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1986, pp. 53–96), pp. 61–64; Susan Buck-Morss discusses Grandville's critical treatment of the urban phantasmagoria (*The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin's Arcades Project*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 149–158. See also Marlene Stoessel, 'Dans le demi-jour: le même et le semblable. Deux Contes en images de Grandville', in *Walter Benjamin et Paris*, pp. 433–441.

8 – *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, esp. Part 3. On the evolution of Benjamin's notion of allegory, and his ultimate break from it in favor of the dialectical image (which incorporated the increasingly important concept of remembrance), see Claude Imbert, 'Le Présent et l'histoire', in *Walter Benjamin et Paris*, pp. 743–792.

9 – Benjamin probably read this essay, which was printed in the *Oeuvres complètes* cited elsewhere in the *Passagen-Werk*. For Baudelaire's ideas on Grandville, see my *Baudelaire and Caricature: From the Comic to an Art of Modernity* (University Park: Penn State Press, 1992), pp. 158–172, which was at the origin of the present article.

10 – Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Claude Pichois (Paris: Gallimard, 1976–77), II, pp. 604, 598, 600.

11 – *Ibid.*, p. 558.

12 – *Ibid.*, p. 558.

13 – Cf. J 57, 3.

14 – *GS* I, 360.

15 – *Ibid.*, 351f.

16 – *Ibid.*, 388.

17 – *Ibid.*, 350.

18 – *Ibid.*, 336.

19 – *Ibid.*, 351.

20 – *Ibid.*, 337.

21 – *Ibid.*, 336.

22 – *Ibid.*, 382.

23 – *Ibid.*, 374.

24 – *Ibid.*, 352.

25 – *Ibid.*, 343, 355.

26 – *Ibid.*, 343.

27 – Michael Jennings, *Dialectical Images: Walter Benjamin's Theory of Literary Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 172.



- 28 – GS I, 356.  
 29 – Ibid., 360.  
 30 – Ibid., 392, 406.  
 31 – On the relation of allegory and redemption, see Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), especially pp. 69ff. For a critical view, see Ullrich Schwarz, *Rettende Kritik und antizipierte Utopie. Zum geschichtlichen Gehalt ästhetischer Erfahrung in den Theorien von Jan Mukarovsky, Walter Benjamin und Theodor W. Adorno* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1981), pp. 117f.  
 32 – GS I, 391.  
 33 – Ibid., 352.  
 34 – Ibid., 349, 354.  
 35 – Ibid., 349.  
 36 – Ibid., 375.  
 37 – Ibid., 381.  
 38 – Ibid., 382.  
 39 – Ibid., 376.  
 40 – M<sup>5</sup> (GS V, 1022f.). Cf. *Paris, Capitale du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (GS V, 71); and numerous examples in the notes for the Baudelaire book printed as *Zentralpark*, especially 19 (GS I, 670), 32a (681), 39 (686).  
 41 – J 80, 2.  
 42 – Ibid.  
 43 – Ibid.  
 44 – J 79a, 4.  
 45 – N 5, 2.  
 46 – J 57, 3.  
 47 – J 56a, 6.  
 48 – J 22, 5.  
 49 – *Zentralpark* 28 (GS I, 677).  
 50 – Cf. also J 77a, 8; *Zentralpark* 19 (GS I, 670).  
 51 – *Zentralpark* 32a (GS I, 681).  
 52 – The Baudelaire book was meant to have a first section entitled 'Baudelaire as Allegorist' (see GS I, 1065). At G<sup>3</sup> Benjamin cites Baudelaire's own mention of allegory in the *Paradis artificiels* as an undeservedly neglected form (GS V, 1009).  
 53 – GS I, 354.  
 54 – Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes* I, p. 651 (emphasis added).  
 55 – Cf. *Zentralpark* 31 (GS I, 679): 'one encounters in Baudelaire a profusion of stereotypes as one does in the poets of the Baroque.'  
 56 – Cf. K 6a, 2, where Benjamin cites Victor Fournel's *Paris futur*, comparing Paris to items in a display window: 'On avait enfin atteint le grand but poursuivi depuis si longtemps: celui de faire de Paris un objet de luxe et de curiosité plutôt que d'usage, une ville d'exposition, placée sous verre, . . . objet d'admiration et d'envie pour les étrangers. . .'  
 57 – *Zentralpark* 32a; 44 (GS I, 681, 689).  
 58 – In *Zentralpark* 39, Benjamin indicates that Baudelaire 'had the mass-produced article before his eyes as a model' for his poetry (GS I, 686).  
 59 – GS V, 54, 69.  
 60 – *Zentralpark* 20 (GS I, 671).  
 61 – J 55a, 3.  
 62 – *Zentralpark* 22 (GS I, 673): 'Baudelaire's poetry makes the new appear within the ever-the-same, and the ever-the-same within the new'. Cf. D 5a, 5, where Benjamin states that the nouveauté comes to the fore when there is nothing truly new.  
 63 – *Zentralpark* 20 (GS I, 671).  
 64 – J 22, 5.  
 65 – *Zentralpark* 20 (GS I, 671).  
 66 – J 57, 3. Cf. *Zentralpark* 13 (GS I, 666), where the object of allegory is both shattered and conserved. In the *Trauerspiel* book, too, allegory preserves the world of the ancient gods of which it proclaims the decline: 'For an appreciation of the transience of things, and the concern to rescue them for eternity, is one of the strongest impulses in allegory' (GS I, 397).  
 67 – J 55a, 3; J 57, 3.  
 68 – *Das Paris des Second Empire bei Baudelaire* (GS I, 603).  
 69 – Cf. GS III, 152.  
 70 – GS V, 51, 67.  
 71 – Benjamin had indeed established a relation between sadism and allegory in the *Trauerspiel* book: 'the voluptuousness with which significance rules, like a ruthless sultan in the harem of things, is without equal in giving expression to [nature]. It is indeed characteristic of the sadist that he humiliates his object and then – or thereby – satisfies it. And so does the allegorist too, in this age drunk with acts of cruelty both lived and imagined' (GS I, 360).  
 72 – *Zentralpark* 20 (GS I, 671): 'It was Baudelaire's endeavour to make manifest the aura characteristic of the commodity.'  
 73 – GS V, 51, 66.  
 74 – In the *Trauerspiel* book, Benjamin writes: 'Allegorical personification has always concealed the fact that its purpose is not to personify the real, but rather to give the real a more imposing form by getting it up as a person' (GS I, 362f.).  
 75 – *Un Autre Monde*, p. 18.  
 76 – Ibid., p. 22.  
 77 – Ibid., p. 52.  
 78 – Ibid., p. 255.  
 79 – Ibid., p. 53.  
 80 – Ibid., p. 101.  
 81 – GS V, 50, 64.  
 82 – On Benjamin's particular use of Marxist theory, especially commodity fetishism, see Rolf Tiedemann, 'Dialectics at a standstill: approaches to the "Passagenwerk"', in Gary Smith, ed., *On Walter Benjamin: Critical Essays and Recollections* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988, pp. 260–291), pp. 276ff. Eugene Lunin, *Marxism and Modernism: An Historical Study of Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin, and Adorno* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1982), pp. 217–229, holds that the Marxist concept of commodity fetishism was used in 'relative purity' (p. 229), but with Benjamin's particular emphasis on the commodity's relation to death. H.D. Kittsteiner, 'Walter Benjamins Historismus', in *Passagen: Walter Benjamins Urgeschichte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, eds. Norbert Bolz and Berndt Witte (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1984), pp. 163–197, argues for Benjamin's divergence from Marx's theory in his emphasis on the role of fantasy in the construction of the commodity, and also on its expressive status, a cipher to be read in the manner of allegory (pp. 183ff.).  
 83 – Cf. G 12a, 3.  
 84 – G 5, 1.  
 85 – GS V, 50f., 65.  
 86 – G 8a, 2; G 9a, 6.  
 87 – G 5a, 2.  
 88 – G 7, 2.  
 89 – Marx, *Kapital*, Ch. 1. Cited by Benjamin at G 13a, 2, from an article by Franz Mehring. Cf. Benjamin's mention of Grandville's 'Spitzfindigkeiten' at G 5a, 2.  
 90 – G 16, 3.  
 91 – *Un Autre Monde*, p. 120.  
 92 – Ibid., p. 52.  
 93 – Benjamin quotes a work by Julius Lessing on the universal exhibitions which mentions the glass fountain (G 6; G 6a, 1).  
 94 – G 1, 3. Cf. G 2, 1, which notes 'the connection between capitalist commercial advertising in its beginnings and Grandville'.  
 95 – G 1, 1.  
 96 – G 2a, 9.  
 97 – G 2, 1.

98 – Ibid.

99 – G 2, 2. The extent to which this kind of relation between a utopian vision and technology belonged to the ideal of Second Empire society may be measured by Flaubert's use of it in his unfinished masterpiece of Second Empire cultural discourses, *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. His plan for the ending contains the following passage: 'Paris un jardin d'hiver; – espaliers à fruits sur le boulevard. La Seine filtrée et chaude, – abondance de pierres précieuses factices – prodigalité de la dorure, – éclairage des maisons – on emmagasinera la lumière, car il y a des corps qui ont cette propriété, comme le sucre, la chair de certains mollusques et le phosphore de Boulogne. On sera tenu de faire badigeonner les façades des maisons, avec la substance phosphorescente, et leur radiation éclairera les rues' (*Bouvard et Pécuchet*, ed. Jacques Suffel, Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1966, p. 331).

100 – G 2, 2.

101 – *Zentralpark* 20 (GS I, 671).

102 – GS V, 66. Cf. *Un Autre Monde*, pp. 138f.

103 – For this same idea of self-projection onto the universe, see the episode of Pécuchet's spiritism in Flaubert's *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, p. 230: 'On y trouve [dans le ciel] des fleurs, des palais, des marchés et des églises absolument comme chez nous'.

104 – M 3, 7.

105 – E 7a, 4.

106 – GS V, 71.

107 – Once again, Flaubert mocks this same bourgeois ideal in Bouvard's vision of the future: 'On ira dans les astres, et quand la terre sera usée, l'Humanité déménagera vers les étoiles' (*Bouvard et Pécuchet*, p. 331).

108 – G 13, 2. Cf. Benjamin's emphasis, in the exposés, on financial speculation as part of the Haussmannization of Paris: 'A Paris la spéculation est à son apogée. Les expropriations de Haussmann suscitent une spéculation qui frise l'escroquerie' (GS V, 72, and cf. 56f.)

109 – *Un Autre Monde*, p. 10.

110 – GS V, 51, 66.

111 – B 4, 5.

112 – GS V, 51; cf. 66.

113 – *Un Autre Monde*, p. 70 (emphasis added).

114 – Ibid., p. 282.

115 – Ibid., p. 70.

116 – Ibid.

117 – B 4, 5.

118 – B 2a, 5; B 2a, 10; B 3, 5.

119 – B 3a, 1. Appropriately, Benjamin quotes this in abbreviated form in the Grandville section of the 1939 exposé.

120 – B 10a, 2; B 3, 3.

121 – B 3a, 1.

122 – B 9, 3.

123 – B 1, 4. Cf. D 5a, 5.

124 – *Un Autre Monde*, p. 281.

125 – D 7, 7a; GS V, 61.

126 – D 7; D 7a.

127 – On Blanqui's cosmology, see Alan B. Spitzer, *The Revolutionary Theories of Louis-Auguste Blanqui*, Columbia Studies in the Social Sciences (New York: Columbia University Press), 1957, pp. 34–44.

128 – *Zentralpark* 9 (GS I, 663) describes the eternal return as 'transforming human events themselves into mass-produced articles'.

129 – D 9, 4.

130 – D 5a, 2: 'Blanqui submits to bourgeois society. But he kneels before it with such violence that its throne is shaken as a result.'

131 – D 5a, 6.

132 – D 10, 3. Dialectic, in contrast dissipates the appearance of sameness and repetition in history (N 9, 5).

133 – D 10a, 1.

134 – GS I, 364.

135 – As Miguel Abensour remarks, Benjamin did not consider that Blanqui might function similarly. The perception of repetition and eternal recurrence could potentially stimulate revolutionary activity and dismantle the system which produced it ('W. Benjamin entre mélancolie et révolution. Passages Blanqui', in *Walter Benjamin et Paris*, pp. 219–247, esp. pp. 245f.).

136 – B 4a, 2.

137 – On the ruin as the manifestation of history-as-transience, see the *Trauerspiel* book, GS I, 353f.

138 – G 12, 2.

139 – The connection is simply noted in the 1935 exposé, developed further in the 1939 version, and supported by a dozen or so entries in the Grandville dossier. See GS V, 51, 66, and 257–261.

140 – 'Principle of Toussenel's zoology: "Le rang des espèces est en raison directe de la ressemblance avec l'homme"' (G 12a, 1). See also the examples of Toussenel's animal symbolism at G 11, 4 (the mole as an allegory of early industrialism and the predominance of brute force over force of intellect), G 11, 5 (the marmot representing hard work which wears thin one's clothing), and G 11a, 3 (the hedgehog as an obsequious hack-writer); and of his plant symbolism at G 11, 6 (the sociable vine which settles easily in all trees and chats with them informally).

141 – G 11a, 2.

142 – G 12, 1.

143 – W 2, 2.

144 – G 12, 4.

145 – N 7a, 1.

146 – Cf. Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, p. 283.

147 – *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* XIV, XV, XVII (GS I, 701, 703). Cf. N 10a, 1.

148 – *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* XVI (GS I, 702).

149 – Buck-Morss relates the utopian desire for harmony not only to Biblical and classical myth, but also to the communist goal formulated by Marx in the 1844 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts' (*The Dialectics of Seeing*, p. 146).

150 – *Zentralpark* 33 (GS I, 682): 'an image flashing up in the now of its recognizability'. On the relation of past and present in Benjamin's historical materialism, see Tiedemann, 'Dialectics at a standstill: approaches to the "Passagenwerk"', pp. 281ff; Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, pp. 219f.

151 – On the importance of this image for Benjamin, see Irving Wohlfarth, 'Et Cetera? De l'historien comme chiffonnier', in *Walter Benjamin et Paris*, pp. 559–609. Wohlfarth there notes the relation between the *Trauerspiel*'s method and that of the *Passagen-Werk*.

152 – N 4, 1.

153 – 1935 exposé (GS V, 59).

154 – N 1a, 2.

155 – N 1, 3.

156 – N 1, 10; N 1a, 8.

157 – G° 19 (GS V, 1011).

158 – GS I, 1096.

159 – Cf. *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* XVII (GS I, 703). Only M. Abensour has suggested such a tension: 'il n'est pas de pensée véritable de l'émancipation qui ne se soit mesurée à la terreur de la répétition' ('Walter Benjamin entre mélancolie et révolution. Passages Blanqui', in *Walter Benjamin et Paris*, p. 247).

160 – *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* VI (GS I, 695).

161 – See the 1931 piece on the destructive character (GS IV, 398), and Irving Wohlfarth, 'No man's land: on Walter Benjamin's

"Destructive Character", *Diacritics*, 8/2 (September 1987), pp. 47–65. On the relationship between Benjamin's ambiguous theory of history and his own historical practice, see Alina Clej, 'Walter Benjamin's Messianic politics: Angelus Novus and the end of history', *Cross Currents*, 11 (1992), pp. 23–40. For M. Jennings, Benjamin's concept of redemption is in fact extra-historical (*Dialectical Images: Walter Benjamin's Theory of Literary Criticism*, p. 62); cf. Clej, art. cit., p. 38.

162 – *Zentralpark* 40 (GS I, 687).

163 – *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* VI (GS I, 695).

164 – N 11, 3.

165 – See the various accounts of Benjamin's journey and death by his travelling companions in GS V, 1183–1205. The order was rescinded the following day, and the other travellers continued to safety.

166 – From Benjamin's last letter, effectively a suicide note, to one of his travelling companions, Henny Gurland, 25 September 1940 (GS V, 1203, emphasis added).

167 – *The Dialectics of Seeing*, p. 79. Benjamin considers the idea of fate a kind of 'mythical bondage' in his early essay 'Schicksal und Charakter'; see Wohlfarth, 'No man's land: on Walter Benjamin's "Destructive Character"', p. 50. Cf. Benjamin's comment at D 10a, 4, relating the idea of futility to the mythic.

168 – J 74a, 2.

169 – 'Das Paris des Second Empire bei Baudelaire' (GS I, 579).

170 – Benjamin had contemplated suicide previously in 1932. See Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, p. 36; Pierre Missac, *Passage de Walter Benjamin* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), p. 12. But his suicide has

remained conspicuously absent in the critical literature on his theories, a remarkable omission *vis-à-vis* a man who identified so closely with the objects of his inquiry, and who believed in the relation between life and work. Christoph Schulte's article on Benjamin's notion of suicide ('"Die Quintessenz der Moderne": Walter Benjamins Bemerkungen zum Selbstmord', in *Antike und Moderne: Zu Walter Benjamin's 'Passagen'*, pp. 224–232) exemplifies the attitude of most: 'De auctoribus ipsis silemus' (p. 230). H. Meschonnic notes the relationship between suicide and allegory's 'destructive tendency', its 'precariousness' ('L'allégorie chez Walter Benjamin, une aventure juive', in *Walter Benjamin et Paris*, p. 719). Missac sees in it a kind of despair mingled with irony ('Walter Benjamin: from rupture to shipwreck', in Gary Smith, ed., *On Walter Benjamin: Critical Essays and Recollections*, pp. 213f.); but contrast Buck-Morss, who argues that 'Blanqui's "resignation without hope" is absent from Benjamin's own voice' (*The Dialectics of Seeing*, p. 337). A. Clej interprets it as a refusal to meet the violence of history ('Walter Benjamin's Messianic politics: Angelus Novus and the end of history', *Cross Currents*, 11 (1992), p. 38 n. 2).

171 – 'Der destruktive Charakter' (GS IV, 398).

172 – 'Le Paradigme révolutionnaire français dans les "Passages parisiens" de Walter Benjamin et dans la pensée d'Ernst Bloch', in *Walter Benjamin et Paris*, p. 336. Cf. also Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, p. 105. She later notes that after 1937 the *Passagen-Werk's* fragments indeed reveal a greater concern with 'recurring political dangers' (p. 304).